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**Annotation.** *Language is the foundation of human communication, a complex system that allows us to share thoughts, emotions, and experiences. This intricate system is built upon language units, the smallest meaningful elements that combine to create larger structures. Understanding how these units develop both semantically (in meaning) and structurally (in form) is crucial for appreciating the dynamism and evolution of language.*

*This article explores the fascinating journey of language units, examining how their meanings evolve and how their structures adapt to reflect changing needs and influences. We'll delve into the interplay of semantic and structural development, analyzing how these processes shape our understanding and use of language.*

**Key words:** *metaphorical extension, metonymy, structural development, morphological change, syntactic change*

### **Introduction. Semantic Development: The Evolution of Meaning**

The semantic development of language units, particularly words, is a fascinating process. Words acquire new meanings, lose old ones, or shift their focus over time, mirroring societal shifts and technological advancements. This evolution can be observed in various forms:

- **Metaphorical Extension:** Words acquire new meanings based on metaphorical associations. For instance, "mouse" originally referred to the rodent but now commonly refers to a computer input device due to its physical resemblance.
- **Metonymy:** A word referring to something is used to refer to something closely associated with it. "Crown" can signify "royal authority," extending its meaning beyond the physical object.
- **Specialization:** Words become more specific in their meaning, narrowing down their scope. "Meat" once encompassed a broader category of food but now refers primarily to animal flesh.
- **Generalization:** A word's meaning expands to encompass a wider range. "Cool" has transitioned from its original meaning of "low temperature" to encompass "stylish" or "excellent."
- **Euphemism:** Replacing a harsh or offensive word with a milder alternative. "Passed away" is a euphemism for "died."

### **Structural Development: Shaping the Form of Language**

Language units are not static. Their structures adapt over time, influenced by factors like:



- **Phonetic Change:** Sounds within words change, altering pronunciation and sometimes spelling. The "k" sound at the end of "night" has been lost in many English dialects.
- **Morphological Change:** The way words are formed and combined with other words changes. The English past tense marker "-ed" has replaced older forms like "-t" and "-d."
- **Syntactic Change:** The rules governing how words are arranged in sentences evolve. Word order in English has shifted from a more flexible system to a stricter subject-verb-object order.
- **Borrowing:** Words are adopted from other languages, enriching the vocabulary and sometimes influencing structure. English has borrowed words from French, Latin, and numerous other languages.

- **Innovation:** New words are coined to describe emerging concepts or objects. "Internet" and "smartphone" are recent inventions reflecting technological advancement.

### **Interplay of Semantic and Structural Development: A Dynamic Process**

Semantic and structural development are closely intertwined. Changes in meaning often lead to structural modifications, and vice versa.

- **Semantic Shift and Morphological Change:** As a word's meaning shifts, its morphology might adapt to reflect the new meaning. The word "burn" originally referred to a fire but now can also mean "to feel intense emotion." This broadened meaning has led to the creation of new verb forms like "burned out" (exhausted).
- **Borrowing and Syntactic Change:** The influx of words from other languages can influence the sentence structure of a language. English has borrowed many French verbs ending in "-er," which have impacted verb conjugations and sentence structures.

### **Analyzing Language Units: Tools and Techniques**

Linguists employ various techniques to study the development of language units:

- **Historical Linguistics:** Examining how language units have changed over time by analyzing historical texts and comparing related languages.
- **Comparative Linguistics:** Comparing different languages to identify shared features and reconstruct their historical relationships.
- **Corpus Linguistics:** Analyzing large datasets of text and speech to identify patterns and trends in language use.
- **Computational Linguistics:** Using computers to analyze language data and model language processes.

### **Implications for Language Learning and Communication**

Understanding the semantic and structural development of language units is crucial for:

- **Effective Communication:** Recognizing how meaning and form are intertwined allows for more nuanced and accurate communication.
- **Language Learning:** Understanding the evolution of language units helps learners grasp the complexities of the language and overcome common misunderstandings.



• **Teaching Language:** Teachers can use knowledge of semantic and structural development to design more effective language instruction.

**Conclusion.** The semantic and structural development of language units is an ongoing process, reflecting the constant evolution of language and culture. This journey is not linear but rather a complex interplay of influences, leading to both innovation and preservation. By studying these dynamic processes, we gain a deeper appreciation for the intricate workings of language and its role in shaping human thought and communication.

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